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SIXTEEN ORIGINS OF THE MIND

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Present-day psychology, physiology, philosophy, and theology—not to mention various social sciences and natural sciences—are cast largely in terms of a body-mind dualism. Representative works in each of these branches of learning seem to presuppose a radical distinction between what is called variously physical, material, bodily, non-conscious, objective, and what is called psychic, spiritual, mental, conscious, subjective. Not that the terms grouped together in either member of the division are synonymous; differing connotations render them now one, now another, appropriate for specific uses; but a core of common meaning is recognizable. The man of the street, too, has caught this point of view from the man of the study; and nothing is more common to common thought than the idea of man as having a dual constitution, his mortal frame and the indefinite but intimate tenant thereof.

Various considerations, however, are leading critical minds to question the validity of the distinction as a hard-and-fast one. The problem is one of the deepest and hardest of our science, and its answer necessarily determines strikingly our interpretations of psychological data. We need not go into these considerations, nor the particular sorts of demolitions and reconstructions urged by various critics. But it would be conducive to a clearer apprehension of the general problem to trace back the distinction of mind and body to its manifold roots—roots in unreflective as well as reflective manners of thinking, primitive as well as sophisticated.

'Psychical,' 'spiritual,' 'mental,' 'conscious,' 'subjective,' etc., etc., are words representing a single broad and general category; at the same time they imply different emphases. We may accordingly expect to find that the various human motives that, taken singly, appear more or less sufficiently obvious as the creators of the distinction, when brought together seem rather strange bed-fellows. And we may expect to have to go to a variety of authors for our material.

Our question will be: *What considerations and motives have, or seem to have, led man to the conception of the 'mental,' etc., as a distinct category?* Looking for points wherever

they may be found, we may expect to explore different realms strange and far removed.

1. The earlier anthropologists of the English school have made much out of the primitive savage's perception of certain striking differences in the behavior of his fellows. Certain faculties are manifested by them at some times, not at others. How vastly different are the warrior living and the warrior dead, the mighty man awake and asleep, the same fellow in normal activity and in the puzzling and mysterious trance, even the same one in health and in disease! Phenomena such as these, where the same individual of gross outward appearance seems now freely and positively active, now negatively inert and passive, led to a vague feeling of the alternate presence and absence of some hidden power or agency. And this power or agency came to be felt as the man himself in the most intimate sense, inspiring the body in the moments of its wakeful life, forsaking it temporarily in sleep or permanently at death.

2. This Tylor-Spencer brand of anthropology had ready another interpretation of animism complementary to the preceding. Primitive emotions are easily aroused by the rather puzzling duplications which are to be seen in dreams, visions, and imaginations of the shapes we know in normal life. His comrades and his family are for the savage a part of the day's experiences, but at times he sees these same comrades and family appearing to him in more shadowy and diaphanous as well as more capricious character. Consider also the shadows that stick closer than brothers representing more or less faithfully the human silhouettes and the images-in-pools that give back even more faithful duplicates. There spontaneously arose, consequently, a feeling—we will not say a reasoned belief—that somehow man had his other—his "shade," as it came to be called sometimes among civilized peoples. That there are shocking inconsistencies and lacunae in the thinking here is understood by merely reminding ourselves of the highly impulsive, emotional, and unreflective character of primitive attitudes.

3. In this connection one should remember also the dream theory. Our typical savage lies down in his hunger for a nap. But after the world has begun to swim before his eyes, he may find himself suddenly in the progress of an absorbing hunt, fully equipped and with dog at heels. It may be an exciting chase and the climax may occur with the game laid low. Sooner or later, however, our man finds himself unhappily dispossessed of his winnings and stretched out most

prosaically on the floor of his tepee. He may attempt to describe his adventures to his friends, but they solemnly enough assure him that he has not once left his tent. What is he to make of it, then, unless it was only his outward husk that lay uninterruptedly in the tent as his soul went hunting on?

4. The assumption of indwelling souls in the bodies of others has received partial explanation further in the introjective theory. A observes in the natural course of experience that the actions of various items of his world are very similar to his own behavior, and by crude analogy comes to assume back of actions intents, purposes, ideas such as guide his own behavior. From the observed fact of a similarity of bodily performance there is an inference beyond to states of mind similar to his own. This is an explanation of the development of other minds, and plainly enough presupposes some sort of preliminary recognition of one's mental self. Certainly it is a sophisticated interpretation.

5. The value-aspect of experienced objects as the ground for their assumption of "mental" characters would seem to be more in keeping with the natural movement of naïve thought. According to this doctrine, in all uncritical experience our "objects" are felt to be overflowing with emotional characters: they are first of all *values* and only by cold processes of abstraction bare *things*. The heavy wind, the root that trips us, are obstinate hindrances unfriendly to us; as Santayana says, "Before he is a substance the sun is a god." And animal and human beings, the latter especially, show these characteristics especially well; accordingly they are felt as dynamic agencies in a peculiarly vivid degree. The various emotional dispositions they show are found to be more or less centered and unified at bottom. This unification, again, is more or less in terms of an essence or agent—a *mind* or *soul*.

6. The Greek sophists had made much of the relativity of sense-qualities and hence their subjectivity. To err is mental. A reason commonly assigned by latter-day epistemologists for the development of the conception of the subjective as a more or less distinct realm, is that from illusions and errors. Original experiences are frequently found upon reflection and examination to have been false. At the time, I was seeing my friend approach, yet later evidence proves that it was really a stranger. But he *was* my friend! Now, a single, one-piece, close-knit, neatly self-consistent universe such as the kind we generally assume, most of us, in our daily think-

ing, would have no place for such glaring contradictions. That friend I saw was not really a part of the real world—he was only subjective. Pressed further, this develops into a distinction between the world and the mind, wherein the former becomes a sort of dumping ground for the “erratic residue of experience.”

7. Another source of the subjective, as alleged by present day thinkers, has been called the “physiological argument.” A little study of psychology shows how the sense-qualities of objective things are dependent upon the integrity of the sensory nervous organization of the percipient. But this nervous organization in itself is absolutely unlike the observed qualities; hence it would appear to be an impenetrable barrier between the quality *as observed* and the quality—or whatever it be—as existing in the real world. What are we going to make of it unless we accept such barrier as fact and admit the contemporaneous existence of the world of pure fact and the world of the psychical?

8. But even within the realm of the psychical, say some, a dualism arises. Logicians have made fundamental to their discipline a distinction between subject and object, between knower and known. Mere knowledge standing on its own legs is impossible, it is *ipso facto* known by some one. Conversely, a knower can't exist *per se*, he is a knower of something. Knowledge, then, is a relation, a relation between knower and known, implying both the more or less independent existence of the two terms of the relation and their juncture in some sense by virtue of the knowing function. The knower here has frequently been called the rational self.

9. Not greatly different is the dualism arising from the experiencer or agent that lives through various experiences and the divers experiences themselves. Certain sets of experiences we recognize as somehow all together belonging to Jack, others to James, the Jack experiences naturally joining each other in a continuous series, and the James likewise. This articulation of experiences, this phase of consistency and permanence and progressive organization running through them, has been taken as the self or the purely subjective.

10. Another form of duality may be found within conscious experience. Reflection shows us experience as private and experience as public. As indicated in 6 above, the way things first appear in naïve experience shows many manifest inconsistencies; there arises then the motive to construct a standard world. Sciences arise as partly inspired by this motive.

Chronology, for instance, early fixed upon certain more constant periodic changes by which the more capricious might be compared and organized into a self-consistent Time. The world which has come to be received as the real world is that which has been developed by social concurrence and perpetuated by social tradition; while the world that we individually know in its partial aspects and conflicting phases is not real but merely mental. The sun, we know, doesn't rise and set in the real world: its rising and setting is only a subjective fact, it is in the mind.

11. The individual as the source of the subjective is shown in a different way by a general survey of the history of thought. In ancient times institutions were emphasized, and likewise those ideas that were more general and abstract were called the more real. To the Greek, particularly of the Platonic type, the universal was the real, the individual was the unreal. These truer realities, these abstract ideas, came to be hypostasized, if not definitely and unmistakably by Plato at least by the Schoolmen. But with the Renaissance the modern world recognized individuality more, and everything came to be described from the standpoint of personal experience. Individualism became rampant in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries; and this warped the current psychology into the brand that took as the most assured realm of reality the 'psychic' 'ideas.' This forms a large share of our 20th century psychological heritage.

12. A more ancient root of the distinction is traceable to the time of the Atomists, and the argument presupposes their metaphysics. Empedocles posited material elements out of which all things are composed. These elements he felt, however, to stand in need of motive power, and love and hate were posited as forces in virtue of which they combined and separated to form the complex items of the world. Anaxagoras went a step farther by finding the principle of combination not in the elements themselves but in a Mind over all, giving them their initial impulsion, leaving them to continue the movement in their higher complexities. Thus, from a consideration of material atoms and their supposed inability to enter of their own accord into combinations to make up the world we know, the mind was hit upon as the source of the needed energy.

13. The Ancients suggested another conception of the soul. It was the 'entelechy' of the body. The essential nature of man's body, its true purpose, was realized in what we call his soul. The body's interests are given expression in its soul.

A modern variant of this theme is the vitalistic conception in which, so it is often said, the true interpretation of the body is to be sought in its *élan vital*, its inherent tendency to strive and push forward, to have life and have it more abundantly. This is the animating soul of the physical body. To approach it directly and intimately we need only look into our own consciousness, where we find non-materiality, non-spatiality, etc.

14. Lately there have arisen thinkers who trace the distinction between the psychical and the physical back to differences discernible in the overtness of actions. The *raison d'être* of ideas, thoughts, etc., is as guides to action; or better, they *are* incipient actions, not yet advanced beyond the mere nascent stage to that full maturity which is overt and observable to others. And an intention that has realized itself, that has passed over into the outward action it foreshadowed, is no longer viewed as a psychical but as a physical process. There is an unbroken continuity of mental and motor life, and the distinction is a relative one. Doubtless a genetic consideration has been operative here: the more primitive organic responses are characterized as nearly mechanical and invariable and stereotyped, whereas with the development of mind, in race and in individual, increasing plasticity and modifiability is evidenced. Description of the former general type in terms of overt and observable behavior may be fairly exhaustive, but the latter, just because they involve an initial element of delay for the decision to be reached, are not in their nascent and crucial stages objective. They are subjective.

15. The analysis of the process of reasoning as it has been made of late years brings out a somewhat different aspect of the same general point. Thinking, it is said, is always evoked by a difficulty, a problematic situation, and its operations are ultimately pointed toward some solution. Many psychological processes are involved here besides those traditionally included under reasoning. Memory, for example, furnishes former experiences as a basis for the development of alternative possible resolutions of the problem, and these alternatives are legitimate products of imagination projected as possible futures. As yet they are only possible, only mental. But when the conflict is ended and an answer adopted and made actual, this adopted course is then real, it is physical.

16. Now for a final suggestion! We may consider those moments so fraught with future consequences when the man of lowly estate learns by chance that he is an efficient agent

in regard to his environment, that he can effect some changes quite on his own account. He has discovered his mind. This realization is spasmodic at first; it is in need of disciplining and man learns his power more accurately through frequent failures. The history of social groups is punctuated by re-discoveries or renewals of this insight. The dawn of the modern era, for instance, is peculiarly well represented by a new realization of the powers of the human reason, even if it be an exaggerated confidence therein, and a search only for the correct *method*. The control and manipulation of outward circumstances, then, may be called the mental, or better, the spiritual, character of our nature, as opposed to the material upon which we operate.

This is a very sketchy survey. It was not intended to elaborate the different points of view but merely to suggest them. In these days of reflective criticism of the category of 'mind,' it may not be without some advantage to have pointed out the different possible sources of the category. That I have given an exhaustive analysis and list I would not pretend. I hope I have carried the division far enough for purposes of suggestion. Which of these motives seem valid—or rather, just what sorts of interpretation of the words 'mental,' 'psychical,' etc., are to be given weight now—that is another question and a fundamental one for psychologists.